

the ones who love us best by eddiespaghetti (foxwatson)

Series: [count the rings around my eyes \[2\]](#)

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Summary:

Eddie's birthday falls pretty close to Thanksgiving, so Richie flies back to New York to help him celebrate.

the ones who love us best

Author's Note:

title credit to the replacements' bastards of young (which big hoping to be found fans may note is on [richie's playlist for eddie](#))

also i know that like, eddie's birthday is arguably in early november but also it's kind of made up and no one's sure soooooo i moved it for narrative purposes. whoops!

The visit after Richie's Chicago shows is unfortunately short-lived. That morning, all sleep warm and soft in the kitchen with the sunlight streaming in through the big window in Eddie's apartment, is perfect. It also feels like something out of a progressive Instagram ad for a life that Eddie doesn't have. It's always so easy with Richie right there at his fingertips. The way they fall together when they're in the same place seems inevitable.

Richie has to fly home after just one more night. Eddie drives him to the airport, and Richie kisses him indulgently, right out in front of the security gate. Eddie's surprised at first, but he leans into it, hooks his fingers in Richie's jacket pockets and lets himself kiss back. He's divorced, and Richie is out, and if anyone happens to take a picture of them, fuck it.

When Richie pulls back, he's a little dazed, smiling goofily at Eddie and brushing his thumb over the scar on Eddie's cheek again.

"What are you gonna do if that's all over the internet tomorrow?" Eddie asks, not pulling away.

"Tell the whole internet that you're my super hot boyfriend. We're high school sweethearts. We have a beautiful story." Richie just nuzzles closer, brushing his nose against Eddie's, pressing close and kissing him again.

"Stop being a sap and get on your flight, dipshit," Eddie mumbles

against his lips, but it comes out all fond and indulgent.

“Mm.” Richie smiles and kisses him again, tugs him closer before he finally pulls away.

For a moment, Eddie keeps his eyes closed and sways forward, towards Richie, and then he sighs and opens his eyes. Richie’s standing there in front of him, still, looking at him like Eddie’s the best thing he’s ever seen. “Stop looking at me like that or you’ll miss your flight, moron.”

“I can do both,” Richie says. He lingers for just one more minute, then presses one last kiss to Eddie’s cheek before he turns and walks into the line to get through security.

Eddie stays to watch him go through, and Richie keeps turning back to check that he’s there and making stupid faces when he does.

He texts Eddie from the other side.

you can go home now mom i made it through

That has the weirdest implications now. I mean I guess it’s better than jokes about you fucking my actual dead mom

sonia’s cancelled, you’re the only kaspbrak for me now

Let me know when you land so I don’t keep wondering if your plane crashed

oh baby i love it when you worry about me

Also when you land I’m breaking up with you

:(

Eddie laughs, and rolls his eyes, and gets back to his car so he can get back to his apartment.

As soon as he gets through the door, Lion-O trots up to him, meowing plaintively even as Eddie crouches down to scratch behind his ears. "You don't have to tell me, I know. He's gone, we're both sad about it, but we're not gonna get tragic. Pull it together, buddy."

Lion-O nudges his head up against Eddie's hand and then paws at his leg. Sighing, Eddie goes over to the couch and sits down so Lion-O can actually climb into his lap. With the damage in his shoulder, he really can't lift Lion-O with both arms, and lifting anything is inadvisable and basically impossible unless it's just his toothbrush. It feels like adding insult to injury as he's getting older.

Even if it was only a couple of days, his apartment already feels unbearably empty without Richie. Richie was right the first time - at some point one of them is going to have to move. He still hopes Richie is willing to move to New York - he has no desire whatsoever to go to LA. After all this time, he's a New Yorker through and through.

After some time spent staring mindlessly at his television, he gets up and goes to the kitchen. He feeds Lion-O, eats standing up, and pours himself a glass of wine.

He goes back to the couch and puts on the classic movie channel.

For a while, he sits there, and it feels just like everything did before Richie flew in. It feels like the whole thing could have been a wild fever dream.

Then his phone lights up.

made it back to LA in one piece

how many gray hairs came in while i was in the air?

Rich if you were going to give me gray hairs I would've had white hair by the age of 15

Richie sends a photo of himself flipping off the camera, but he's obviously grinning behind his hand.

Eddie, embarrassingly, brushes his thumb over Richie's smile on his screen, then has to roll his eyes at himself while Lion-O meows at him. When even his cat is judging him, he knows it's a new low.

He wants to respond, and keep texting, but he also knows that eventually he's going to have to stop, and that the only way the long distance part of this is going to work is if he can manage to grow some self-control.

Not having Richie there is like a physical ache now, though. It was one thing when he had left and gone and it took Eddie a few days to fold up the air mattress. Now his bed still smells like Richie. He still has little bruises around his hip bones. If he stands in the kitchen and closes his eyes he can pretend that Richie might crack a stupid joke and press up behind him and wrap arms around his waist.

Every time he falls into it, he tries to shake it, but he still spends most of his evening sitting on the couch or drinking water in the kitchen, just thinking about Richie, and missing him.

Then Richie texts him again.

hey isn't your birthday like right before thanksgiving

like didn't you complain about that when we were kids like it almost was on thanksgiving one year? or it actually was?

Eddie's surprised, though not unpleasantly so. Just admittedly, he hasn't really been thinking about his birthday with everything else going on. Last year, for his 40th, Myra had complained about all of the restaurants Eddie had suggested and refused the very concept of cake. They'd stayed home, and he'd had one glass of wine and then fallen asleep on the couch. He blinks down at his phone.

It fell on Thanksgiving once in like 90. I can't believe you remember that

of course i remember eds how could you insult me like that :(

Don't give me that face asshole. Why are you asking?

i don't know. do you have plans?

Already, Eddie's heart rate is starting to pick up. Can he get that lucky? Probably not.

Guess I'll be drinking at home with my cat, unless you have any better suggestions

maybe i do ;)

Care to elaborate?

not yet

The exchange, as nebulous as it is, leaves Eddie giddy. He ends up putting on his B-52s record and dancing around his apartment by himself, laying down on the couch to serenade Lion-O. He's too happy to be embarrassed.

He falls into bed that night and smiles up at the ceiling. He wears his pajamas from when Richie was still there, and tugs one of the pillows close to his chest - the one that still smells like Richie's shampoo. A week and a half, compared to an unknown length of time, is nothing. Eddie falls asleep with his face all mashed against the pillow, a hint of a smile still lingering on his face.

Richie calls him the next day.

"All of our friends fucking suck."

It surprises Eddie into a laugh, and he nearly drops Lion-O's food while he tries to juggle it and the phone at the same time. "Right, hi Rich, nice to hear from you, too."

"Yeah, yeah, we're like - I think we're past the point of awkward formality, Eds. And the important thing here is that all of our friends suck. I was trying to get everyone together for a big Friendsgiving and a party for your birthday and none of them can do it! Ben and Bev are off on their stupid boat and Bill's on a movie again so Mike's traveling with him, and they all just said they'll see us at Christmas."

Eddie smiles softly at his kitchen counter, and then turns to watch Lion-O. Even if their friends can't make it, Eddie's sure he'll hear from them - and none of that matters as much as Richie trying to get all of them together again. "Well I think we can make something work with just the three of us. You me, and Lion-O?" At the sound of his name, Lion-O perks up and trots back up, mewling at Eddie's feet. "I mean, if you can't come back so soon, though-"

"No, no, of course I'm coming, don't start with that-"

"I just meant maybe we could come to LA. Not that I love the idea of flying with Lion-O-"

"Eds, man, LA for Thanksgiving? That's so fucking depressing. I bet we could practically watch the Macy's Day parade from your fucking window, go for walks in Central Park while all the leaves have changed, and you want to come to California? Dude, fuck that."

Laughing, Eddie presses the phone a little closer to his face. "Okay. Alright. Come back, then. I'm not gonna try to stop you."

There's a soft little huff of laughter on the other end of the phone. "Yeah? You're not gonna get sick of me?"

"If I was gonna get sick of you, Rich, it would have happened 30 years ago. Get back here already."

"Yeah I - yeah. Okay." Richie's a little breathless, obviously still smiling, because Eddie can hear it in his voice. "I gotta like- work on some scheduling stuff and we still have to figure out when and where

we're shooting the new Netflix special, but I'll get it all worked out. I'll be there as soon as I can."

"Good."

Once everything is settled, it's only a week before Richie's flying back out to New York. Eddie passes it quickly and methodically. He runs in the park, exchanging nods with all the people he sees every day. He stops to take pictures of things like cute dogs or oddly dressed street performers so he can send them to Richie.

He even manages to squeeze in a visit with David.

They have a lot to catch up on.

"So this is Richie, the one you grew up with who came to visit you?" David asks.

Eddie nods. "Yeah, we're - he's coming back, for my birthday and Thanksgiving and we... talked things out."

"It sounds like you're avoiding something."

"It's silly." Eddie pauses, and David just looks at him. Of course he does. "I mean he literally implied he's going to propose someday, but we didn't actually clarify what's happening or if he's really trying to move to New York - things happened but then he had to leave, so I guess I'm hesitant to refer to him as my... whatever."

"Is that a reasonable goal for this visit, then? Establishing terms? It sounds like that might give you a better sense of security."

Having therapy homework is absolutely one of Eddie's least favorite things, as much as he knows it's probably helpful. He sighs, and nods. "Okay. I'll try."

"That's all I'm asking for, Eddie."

Aside from the minor stress of his homework from David, though, Eddie's doing okay.

Knowing that it's going to be horrible enough just picking Richie up

from the airport in Manhattan traffic so close to Thanksgiving, Eddie makes a final run for provisions before Richie even gets there. He buys the things he knows they'll need, but then ends up texting Richie from the store.

Are you going to make me buy a turkey?

I don't even like turkey.

It would be way too much food for two people. If we were hosting everyone I'd attempt a turkey but for just us it seems silly. I think there are better options.

Instead of texting him back, Richie calls him. "Why does it sound like you're freaking out?" He asks.

"I'm not freaking out," Eddie insists, although he is maybe, admittedly, slightly freaking out. "I just want to know your Thanksgiving food preferences, is that so complicated?"

"Eds, I haven't been to a real Thanksgiving meal since my mom died. I don't even remember what turkey tastes like outside of the context of a sad deli sandwich, I'm not gonna miss it. We could order pizza and that would be an improvement over my last, like, ten years of Thanksgivings."

Something in Eddie's chest aches. Not strictly out of sadness in that particular moment. Just - he wishes Richie were there with him already. "Myra was always picky about Thanksgiving. We had to go see my mom while she was alive, and I had to make the turkey, and carve it, because that's somehow a gendered activity, and the whole thing probably looked like a demented Norman Rockwell postcard but every year I hated it. And we never had dessert. Or anything that actually tasted good. The turkey was terrible, because Myra thought it was weird for me to watch cooking videos and I could never fucking figure it out so it was just. Disgusting. Dry. Every year it was dry."

It's around this time that Eddie remembers he's still got a basket on one arm and he's standing in front of the meat section in a Manhattan Whole Foods.

The guy behind the counter is sort of giving him a look. Eddie shoots him a tight, awkward little smile and walks away.

Richie clears his throat on the other end of the phone. "Okay, so clearly you have turkey-related PTSD, we can deal with that. No turkey! Or maybe yes turkey if we have a real Loser Thanksgiving next year, and I help you study up. Noted. In the mean time - dude, I don't fucking know anything about cooking. Sometimes I ordered something in on Thanksgiving if anywhere would give me shit. Other times I just ate cereal in my underwear on the couch like every other day."

"I want to cook things. Some things. For you. I think it could be nice. I just don't know what to make. Do you like potatoes?"

"Are there people who don't like potatoes?" Richie asks.

With Richie's jokes and help, Eddie ends up planning to make a few simple side dishes. Mashed potatoes, stuffing. He gets the canned cranberry sauce because Richie says he likes it, and he buys them a pie because he doesn't trust his own baking skills. It shapes up to be a nice little Thanksgiving sampling. It's still a couple of days til his birthday, and a couple of days beyond that before Thanksgiving, but everything should keep in the fridge until then.

He escapes from the grocery store mildly tense but still relatively unscathed - mostly thanks to Richie on the other end of the phone.

Just like he had in Derry, Richie somehow makes everything feel easier. He makes things seem doable that don't when Eddie gets caught up in his own head. Both of them obviously have more than their fair share of issues, but it really feels like they balance each other out nicely. Eddie feels like he should tell David that more explicitly the next time he sees him.

The day that Richie flies in, Eddie leaves for the airport hours in advance.

It takes him a full two hours to get there, when normally it would only take closer to one. He spends the entire drive feeling how tense his neck and shoulders are but he also feels like he's incapable of making himself relax.

He's not consciously thinking that with this being his and Richie's first attempt at holidays together as a couple everything needs to be perfect. However, it's probably there, lurking on some subconscious level, and no matter how hard Eddie tries, that perfectionism just won't seem to abandon him.

Having Richie there will help. Eddie just has to get to him.

The airport itself is a fucking nightmare. Eddie finds parking, but only barely, and he has to trudge and trudge to actually get to where he needs to be to pick up Richie. Then when he does, the whole area is fucking packed, full of people coming home for the holidays, reunions all around him, and he knows he's just standing there looking pinched and miserable.

This is the one thing he fucking hates about Manhattan - but LA wouldn't be any better.

Richie's text is a godsend.

this airport is hell right now. is this what hell is like? i bet it is

How the fuck would I know? But also just get down here so we can leave, please, you're right

saving that bit where you told me i'm right

Eddie rolls his eyes, but he smiles nonetheless.

"If I scare you again, are you gonna kill me?" Richie asks behind him.

Admittedly, Eddie startles a little, and he turns and swats at Richie's chest with the back of his hand. "You did that on purpose, asshole."

Richie grins at him. "Yeah, maybe a little."

"C'mere."

Eddie grabs the collar of his stupid patterned button-down and pulls him into a kiss, long and lingering. Richie's all stubbly from clearly not having shaved in the morning because he had an early flight - Eddie sort of loves it. Even when he pulls back from the kiss, he keeps Richie close for a minute, just breathing him in. To be fair, he smells like he's been on a plane for like 5 hours, but Eddie doesn't care, because it's Richie and he's there.

"Hey," Richie says, quietly.

Opening his eyes, Eddie lets go of Richie's collar and stops standing on his toes. "Hey. Sorry."

Grinning again, Richie puts a hand on the back of his neck and pulls him close again, for another short kiss. "For what? For that?" He moves again, and kisses Eddie's cheek, right over his scar. "Don't be sorry."

"Fine, I'm not sorry. I just missed you."

At that, Richie pulls him close, arms around his waist, and pulls him into a hug, rocking him back and forth a little. Eddie feels all of the tension fall away from his body, just like that. He rests his head against Richie's neck, right by the hollow of his throat, and Richie rests his chin on top of Eddie's head. "Missed you, too, Eds," Richie says quietly.

Eddie laughs at that, and pulls back just to look at Richie's face. "It's only been like a week and a half since we saw each other."

Richie softens a little, sighing out a little laugh of his own. "Well, I think we've both suffered enough to be allowed to be sappy. Plus someone," he pokes Eddie in the ribs, "Is turning 41 this week, and may be growing soft in his old age."

"I'll show you going soft," Eddie grumbles, but that just makes Richie throw his head back and laugh so loudly that people turn to look at them. Eddie resists the urge to flip them off, instead just keep his

hands on Richie's arms. He rubs over them for a moment. "Rich, hey, asshole, come on, let's get the fuck out of here, huh?"

"Your wish is my command, birthday boy," Richie tells him with a wink.

Eddie groans, but he just takes Richie by the wrist and tugs him through the crowd and out towards the parking deck. "It's gonna take us probably two hours to get back, I hope you're ready to be just. Stuck in fucking traffic."

"As long as I'm with you!"

Horribly, that actually makes Eddie blush, just a little, but Richie is still being dragged along behind him, and can't see it. Thank god for small mercies.

Once they're in the car, Richie immediately tosses his duffel in the back and lounges again, fucking with the radio. They get stuck in traffic before they even make it out of the airport, so they're definitely in for the long haul.

"You don't have any riveting stories to get us back to the apartment, do you? Nothing that would last us exactly two hours?" Eddie asks, turning to look at him while they're stopped.

Richie snorts. "Eds, all I've done is mope on the couch and rehearse for my special and bicker with my agent. You could probably detail every single thing Little Mr. Spaghetti did in the last week and a half and it would be more interesting than my life."

"Because it would be so interesting for me to tell you how much my cat sleeps and licks himself."

"Least he's cute."

"You're cute, shut up." To Eddie's surprise, that actually does shut Richie up, and when Eddie looks over, he's blushing a little. Eddie blinks, and smiles. "Really?"

"Shut up. Sounded like something you could have said when we were kids, I was having a moment."

Eddie laughs, and hands Richie his phone. "Here, put on a playlist, save yourself."

So most of the way back to the apartment, they listen to music. There's an obligatory reprise of their performance to Rock Lobster, then Richie gets distracted and puts on Queen for a while. Then there's The Replacements, and Bowie, and Violent Femmes, all before they finally make it back. The drive home is a lot less tense than the drive over, because Eddie can't really get himself all the way worked up when Richie's singing falsetto on Bohemian Rhapsody in the passenger seat.

They take the elevator up to the apartment, because Eddie takes one look at the stairs and decides he's still too tired.

As soon as they're through the door, Lion-O trots over to greet both of them. He goes to Eddie first, meowing up at him and curling around his legs, and then he goes up to Richie, too.

Eddie smiles, and watches Richie crouch down to pet him, just like last time.

"Little Mr. Spaghetti! I missed you, too, buddy. Don't tell your dad but I'm really just here for you."

"And during the week of my birthday, Rich. I'm heartbroken."

Richie looks up at him from where he's sitting on the floor and grins. "What? I'm trying to make him feel special. I want your cat to like me more than you so I can steal him."

"Obviously he should love both of his parents equally," Eddie bites back without thinking about it, and he starts digging around in the kitchen for the takeout menus.

Suddenly, though, Richie is suspiciously quiet. It only takes another moment before Eddie gets worried and peeks back out of the kitchen to see Richie, sitting fully on the floor, still petting Lion-O. He's sort of just looking at the wall, though, and he looks a little glassy-eyed. "Is this our cat? Do we have a cat?" Richie asks him.

Eddie swallows. "I - uh. Well I mean if either one of us moves, he's

still like - coming with us? Whether you come here or I go to LA or whatever, and I know we didn't really-"

"Oh my God, Little Mr. Spaghetti, I get to adopt you," Richie says, looking back down at Lion-O, placing his hands gently on either side of Lion-O's head. "I am also your dad now."

Unable to help himself, Eddie giggles, just a little, and Richie looks over, catches him laughing, and smiles. He picks up Lion-O, carefully, because that's a thing he can do, and brings him over. Eddie scratches behind Lion-O's ears just to hear him purr, and then looks up to see Richie, looking all soft and overwhelmed.

Richie shifts Lion-O into one arm and pulls out his phone to hand it to Eddie. "We should take a family photo."

"Rich, you've been on a plane all day, I look like I've been through the fucking Thunderdome or something, I'm sure-"

"Just for us, then, please? For my phone background?" Richie does a thing where his eyes are all big, and he's almost pouting. It should look absolutely fucking ridiculous - instead it's just kind of adorable, especially while he's still holding Lion-O.

Eddie sighs. "Fine." He smiles while he's still pulling up the camera, and flips it so he can make sure they're all in frame.

Admittedly, it turns out pretty cute. Richie's got a big, genuine crooked smile on his face, and Eddie's unable to keep himself from looking genuinely happy, too. Lion-O is looking up, trying to reach towards Richie with one paw.

It's definitely phone background material.

Lion-O finally jumps from Richie's arms and goes back to his favorite spot on the couch.

"I guess if you did want to post that somewhere, that would be fine," Eddie tells him as he goes back to looking for takeout menus.

Leaning in, Richie kisses him on the cheek. "Thanks, Eds."

That night, they end up ordering takeout from Eddie's favorite Thai place and eating it on the couch. They argue over stupid shit, and Eddie gestures with his fork while he insists that Captain Picard could absolutely take Captain Kirk in a physical fight.

After the leftovers are in the fridge and the dishes are in the sink, they go back to the couch, and they end up cuddling. There's no other word for it. Eddie starts with pressing his legs against Richie's, where Richie's sitting on the other end of the couch, but then they tangle their legs together and start nudging at each other. As much as it calls back to the times they spent in the hammock growing up, Eddie finally just huffs and gets up, goes over, and sits down in Richie's lap.

"Are we too old for this?" he asks quietly as he does it. "Like am I gonna break you?"

"You're not gonna break me, Eddie baby." At that, Eddie shivers, just a little, and wraps his arms around Richie's shoulders, and leans in to kiss Richie's temple, and the top of his head. Richie rubs at his back. "You are tense, huh?"

"Traffic and airport shit. That's most of it." Eddie curls in on himself just enough to press his face against Richie's neck. There, and now that he's had a chance to freshen up a little, Richie still smells like himself. "I'm glad you're here. That helps, too."

Richie hums. "I'm glad I'm here. I'm gonna take you somewhere nice for your birthday tomorrow. Wherever you want. Then we can take it easy for a day, or you can do some cooking, then the next day we'll have Thanksgiving, it'll be nice."

Shifting, Eddie presses closer, as close as he can. "My therapist said I should ask you about something and I don't want it to make things awkward later."

"What is it?"

Eddie moves his hands down to Richie's waist, moving them so he can specifically feel Richie breathing. "I know you said that thing before you left last time about how I'm stuck with you, and you'd

joked around before that about moving here but we didn't actually - set up the specifics. You made that joke at the airport, too, but we didn't really have a talk about what we're doing. And I realized just because we didn't get into specifics, it was making me anxious."

"Does boyfriend work for you? Do you want something different?"

Shaking his head, Eddie finally manages to pull back. He straightens Richie's glasses, and then straightens his hair, too. "No. Boyfriend is good. I just... we are... boyfriends?"

"I know it's weird. I've never had one either, you know. Not officially. We're muddling through it together."

"I know it's silly but I do actually need a yes or no answer."

Richie huffs out a little laugh, but it's not unkind. "Yes, Eds, I'll be your boyfriend. Will you be mine? Check yes or no."

Eddie opens his mouth to say something snarky, but Richie cuts him off with a kiss instead. They stay there, like that, for a while. Eddie stays in Richie's lap, and combs his fingers through Richie's hair while they kiss, deep and unhurried. Richie moves his hands up and down Eddie's back, tugs him in by the waist, and leaves little kisses up and down his jaw and neck.

Eventually, the kissing slows down, and they're both getting tired. Eddie ends up with his temple pressed to Richie's forehead, their noses just barely brushing. "We should probably get up and go to bed," he suggests.

"Yeah? You wanna take your boyfriend to bed?" Richie looks up to flutter his eyelashes at Eddie.

Scoffing, Eddie stands up and stretches. "You're such an asshole," he groans. Then he reaches over and fucks up Richie's hair before he walks away. "I'm gonna go change first, remember to brush your teeth before you come to bed."

"Gets me so hot when you tell me to take care of my personal hygiene."

“You’ve agreed to this now, there’s no turning back.”

Once Eddie’s changed, they end up brushing their teeth together, elbows bumping as they jostle for space in front of the sink. It’s the most domestic thing that Eddie can imagine. He’s happier and more comfortable than he’s been in years.

They settle into bed with relatively no fuss, having picked out their sides and sleeping arrangement the last time Richie was there.

As they’re drifting off, or trying to, Eddie turns to him. “That was the other thing - do you really want us to move in together? I wasn’t sure if you were serious, since all of that was kind of - in passing, and some of it before we were together.”

“D’you want me to move in with you?” Richie asks, his voice all rough with approaching sleep.

“Yeah, actually. I really fucking do.” Eddie says it, and it’s a weight off his chest. He rolls onto his side and presses his hand right over Richie’s heart. “Plus, I think Lion-O misses you when you’re gone.”

“Course he does, I’m his second father. It’s like I’m leaving him in a broken home.” Richie goes quiet, then, and Eddie wonders if he’s fallen asleep. Just before they both do, though, Richie mumbles, “Gotta talk to my agent. We’ll figure it out.”

In the morning, Eddie makes the coffee and feeds Lion-O while Richie’s still asleep.

The group chat quickly fills up with birthday wishes, and Eddie tells them all thank you, and that he and Richie have plans so he’s sure it’ll be a good day.

Problem is, he’s been so busy worrying about everything else, he never really decided on anything to do for his birthday. He knows Richie wants to make it good for him, but Eddie is only recently relearning the things he really enjoys doing. He likes running, but not in the way that he wants to do it on his birthday instead of letting his boyfriend (his *boyfriend*) sleep in. He likes comic books, still, but even going to Midtown Comics wouldn’t blow much of their time.

Then again - maybe they could take a little side trip to Midtown Comics. He didn't take Richie last time, and there are new things he'd like to check on and maybe pick up. There are things there that he could get himself for his birthday, just for fun.

They could go and get ice cream, even though it's cold.

Then Eddie has an idea. An idea that's maybe more for Richie than it is for him, but if Richie's having fun, than he'll be having fun, too. So fuck it.

Once he makes a plan via mapping out their entire day, he actually finds that he's excited, and Richie's still sleeping.

So, carefully, Eddie goes over and wakes him up.

"Rich, hey."

Richie just sort of mumbles and rolls over.

Eddie clears his throat and rubs at Richie's back. "Hey. Sweetheart."

That actually gets Richie to turn over and blink up at him, blearily. "D'you just call me sweetheart? That's fucking adorable. I like that one." He closes his eyes again, just for a second, and then they fly open. "Oh hey! Shit! It's your birthday! Happy birthday, Eds!"

Richie's enthusiasm makes him laugh, just a little, and Richie goes fumbling for his glasses and puts them on just to look at Eddie and grin.

"Hey. Birthday boyfriend. Get it, it's like - I mean it's terrible but it's a joke I've never gotten to make before, so we're rolling with it. Sorry I slept in, I was gonna wake you up with coffee and shit. Must've forgotten to set an alarm."

Eddie leans in and kisses him on the temple, just because he can. "It's fine, Rich. I made coffee, there's still some in the pot. I just want you to get up and dressed because I have ideas, now. Let's go do birthday stuff."

"You got it, babe."

Though he tries to roll his eyes, Eddie still laughs and smiles and blushes a little. He's happy, with Richie here and with a fun day ahead of them. Really, truly, astoundingly happy. Stupidly happy. It's a really nice feeling.

Once Richie is dressed and ready, and they've said goodbye to Lion-O, they grab breakfast at a deli. Richie insists on buying, and insists that he will all day, which Eddie grumbles about at first, but when Richie puts an arm around his waist and really asks, Eddie relents. It's all very coupley. It leaves more of that pure, undeniable joy bubbling up in Eddie's chest. It feels like being back on the rides at Coney Island.

Their first real stop is the Midtown Comics at Grand Central. Eddie refuses to go to fucking Times Square on his birthday on pain of death, so this one will have to do.

Richie's face, once they make it upstairs to the store, is a revelation. It's like every bit of childhood joy Eddie feels himself in a place like this, distilled into one expression. Eddie grins and reaches over to grab his hand and tug him along.

"Come on, let me show you where the really cool shit is," Eddie tells him.

They spend a while digging through back issues and holding things up at each other. Stuff they read as kids, stuff they missed out on reading together because it came out in the interim. It's hardly a surprise to find out how much Richie loves Deadpool, but Eddie teases him about it all the same.

Though Eddie set himself a firm budget, they still leave the store with a bag full of comics, and Richie carries it without a single complaint.

After the comics store, Eddie takes Richie for ice cream, and they eat it outside in the cold, huddling close to each other for warmth. Richie even wraps his free arm around Eddie, and they stand there together very nearly cuddling.

Then there's nothing left but the big part of Eddie's plan. Richie asks where they're going, but Eddie keeps a tight lip until they make it to

the first place - a place called Modern Pinball. Once they're outside, Eddie turns to Richie and grins.

"So I- I had this idea this morning, and I promise it's as much for me as it is for you, but - I looked up the best arcades in New York, and I thought we could go arcade hopping. This place only has pinball - and I know you never liked to play but you always used to-"

"I used to love to watch you play," Richie finishes for him, grinning the same way he had at the comic book store that morning. He laughs, then, too, and puts a hand on the back of Eddie's neck to pull him in for a kiss. "I could never focus, I'd always get distracted right when the ball was heading for the flippers, fuck. But you used to be so good at it."

"I'm probably so fucking rusty," Eddie tells him, laughing, too.

"Who gives a shit? Come on, it's your birthday, let's go throw all our money away on arcade machines like teenagers."

So Eddie laughs again, and pulls him in by the hand.

They spend a couple of hours fucking around. Compared to some of the other people in there, Eddie's no master at pinball. He's not as bad as he was afraid he'd be, though. He's still got a little of his old coordination, even if sometimes his motor skills aren't the best in his injured arm.

Richie spends the whole time glued to Eddie's side, either watching from one side of the machine, or literally standing behind Eddie, plastered to his back, chin hooked over his shoulder. They're in New York City - nobody cares.

They stop for a late lunch, then end up at a barcade that's supposed to be the best place in the city. There's two player games, shit like Street Fighter, which Richie used to live on. He still kicks Eddie's ass at it, even now, because he hasn't forgotten any of the fucking moves somehow. They play one of those two-person shooter games and Eddie keeps having to shout at Richie to try and keep him from dying, because he keeps trying to shoot things on Eddie's side of the screen. They feed tokens into that one and play for ages.

Eddie even ends up watching Richie play Galaga for an impressively long time. He stands to the side, cheering him on, and cursing any time Richie fails to dodge.

They leave the place arm in arm, and instead of going to the third place on the list, Eddie tells Richie they can just go to dinner.

It's a place that's a lot closer to Eddie's apartment - a nice little Italian place that Eddie's gone to sometimes when he wants to spend a little more. They've always been friendly when he eats there alone, at the bar, and now with Richie there, they get a table and the whole place seems just a little bit fancier. They serve some of the best food Eddie's ever had in his life, and from Richie's reactions, he enjoys it, too. They split a nice portion of tiramisu for dessert, and both of them are full and a little bit sleepy by the time they head home.

Once they stumble up to the apartment, Richie puts the bag of comics down, and Eddie takes off his coat and goes to feed Lion-O.

After all the basic things have been handled, they end up on the couch together with their legs all tangled - apparently a default position now.

"Eds, I'm never gonna get up again. I wanted to suggest we do something sexually adventurous and celebratory tonight, but I don't think I can move."

Eddie snorts, and lifts his leg up to nudge his foot against Richie's shoulder. "We don't have to do anything. We were busy all day and we had fun. I had... a lot of fun. I can't remember the last time I had this much fun on my birthday."

Richie lifts his head and smiles over at Eddie. "Yeah? Really?"

"Richie, please actually pause and imagine what my birthdays have been like for the last like, 20-something years of my life. Ever since I left Derry. Really stop and think."

There's a brief pause, and Richie winces. "Right. That was probably a low bar."

"My point wasn't that it's a low bar, Rich, stop it. My point was..."

Thank you. You didn't have to do all this."

Richie shrugs. "I wanted to."

"I know, I just - I appreciate it."

Richie moves, then, shifting his legs off the couch so he can scoot closer and pull Eddie's legs up into his lap. "You shouldn't have to. It's nice that you do, just - this is like bare minimum boyfriend behavior."

Eddie snorts. "You say that like that matters somehow, like I'm ever gonna have some other boyfriend."

The only response to that is silence. When Eddie looks up, it becomes obvious he's accidentally said another one of those things that has Richie all soft and overwhelmed.

He digs his heel into Richie's thigh. "You said that first!"

"Yeah but I was kind of fucking around! I mean, okay, I wasn't, you called my bluff, but it's different when you say it. I can say it, and it's like - okay, fine, but you say it and somewhere little 13 year old me just burst into tears, okay? In a good way, obviously, it's just a little overwhelming."

"I love you, but you are such a dipshit."

The silence returns, but this time Eddie was watching, so he sees the transition as Richie's eyes get all big and glassy all over again. "Yeah?"

To be honest, Eddie hadn't realized he hadn't said it already. He goes back over everything in his head, and realizes he forgot that part, somehow, in everything else. Shit. "Yeah. Sorry I sort of - thought I said that part already."

"I guess it was a little implied." Richie turns, and pulls Eddie closer again so he can tug him in for a kiss. "I love you, too, Eds."

It's not like Eddie hadn't assumed - but it is nice to hear. His heart does a little skip in his chest.

They trade kisses on the couch for a while, but a long day and a big meal did really take it out of both of them, and they head to bed and fall asleep cuddling again without quite managing to have sex.

Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise that Eddie wakes up in the morning to Richie, pressing open-mouthed kisses to the nape of his neck.

"Morning," Richie mumbles against his skin, and his voice is still all low and sleep-rough, and it sends a shiver down Eddie's spine. "Consider this the IOU birthday sex from yesterday so tell me whatever you want, I'll do it."

That makes Eddie shiver all over again. He reaches back, getting a hand in Richie's hair, and sighs. Fighting every stupid easily grossed out impulse he has, he turns over and seeks out Richie's mouth for a kiss. Both of them do have morning breath, but in that moment, Eddie loves it. There is something a little bit gross about it, but it's intimate, too. He would never do this with anyone else - he would never want to.

They tangle together and push and pull until both of them manage to get all of their clothes off. Then they come together again, Eddie's hands on Richie's shoulders, and his arms, and Richie's hands on Eddie's waist, wrapping around him, pulling him as close as possible.

He can feel Richie's cock twitching against his thigh as he gets hard, and it's another little moment of intimacy that he appreciates.

It's a difficult decision, but when Richie starts mumbling suggestions against Eddie's skin, some of them seem a little too adventurous when they've still barely done anything together.

In the end, Richie gives Eddie his first ever birthday blowjob, which is, somehow, if it is possible, even better than it sounds. It's not that Richie is an astounding expert at giving head, but he's sloppy and enthusiastic and he moans with Eddie still in his mouth, which feels like it vibrates all the way through Eddie's bones. Eddie's also so sensitive and desperate for Richie's touch generally that it doesn't take long at all before he's coming in Richie's mouth. Richie lifts his head up while he's still wiping the corner of his mouth with his thumb.

“Oh, fuck, come here,” Eddie tells him - moaning it as much as saying it, and he kisses Richie desperately. It’s filthy, because he can still taste himself in Richie’s mouth, but that makes the whole thing that much better, just how gross it is, how much he would only ever do this with Richie, and for Richie.

When they separate again, Eddie kisses his way down Richie’s body and returns the favor, in spite of Richie’s protests. He has no fucking clue what he’s doing, but he jerks off Richie while he licks at the head of his cock, he sucks on what he can fit in his mouth, and it still sets Richie off pretty quickly.

“Just leave me here to die,” Richie groans with one arm thrown over his face.

Eddie snorts while he’s still crawling up Richie’s body, and he settles in next to him on the bed, reaching up to pull Richie’s arm back down. “Stop, let me see your face, fucking idiot.”

“You’re so fucking hot. That was so hot. That’s only like the third time we’ve had sex, we haven’t even gotten all the way and I already think I’m gonna die. If I ever actually get to fuck you, I swear to God it’ll kill me.”

“Okay please note that if you die while you’re fucking me I will be so pissed off. I will personally march down to Hell just to strangle you.” That gets Richie to move his arm, mostly so he can laugh. He rolls onto his side, and Eddie kisses him for it, sweetly. “Now, come on,” Eddie continues, “Let’s go brush our teeth.”

Compared to the day before, they do take it easy. They don’t even leave the apartment. They lay around on the couch and watch movies with Lion-O curled up in between them. They listen to some Queen records and make out for a while. They heat up leftovers for lunch, and order pizza for dinner.

Eddie does a little prep for their tiny Thanksgiving the next day, peeling and chopping potatoes and setting out the bread so it can get stale for the stuffing.

They even crawl back into bed early, and spend almost an hour just

cuddling and talking.

They're winding down when Eddie has a passing thought. "Hey. So we can't actually see the parade very well from my place, I don't think. If you wanted to get up in the morning we could go for a little bit. It starts just south of my place, like it's on this side of the city, the start of the parade route."

Richie lifts up his head and blinks at Eddie through the darkness. "Yeah? You want to?"

Eddie shrugs. "I've never gone. Too many kids, too many germs, you know."

"Yeah. Yeah." Richie rubs at his back for a minute, and stays quiet. Then he speaks up again. "You know what? Fuck it, why not, just drag me out of bed in the morning, we'll bundle up and see what we can see."

So that's what they do. Eddie sets an alarm, and makes coffee. He dresses himself, then sets out some warm clothes for Richie and wakes him up with coffee. They set food out for Lion-O, and quietly make their way down to the street.

The closer they get, the more crowded it is. Some people camp out pretty early, and the streets are filled with families and security and cameras. They find a spot inside Central Park where they both agree they can at least see the balloons and some of the fun stuff. They're not right on the parade route, but it's less about being right in the middle of it and more about doing it at all.

There's still something quietly thrilling about it, though. The energy in the air, the kids pointing and laughing in excitement, seeing all the big balloons this close. Richie, of course, leans over to make little jokes about the balloons, and Eddie nudges him in the ribs. They stand close together, Richie's arm around Eddie's shoulders, Eddie reaching up to hold onto his hand.

Since the parade starts on their end, the best of it is over pretty quickly.

Eddie turns to Richie and kisses him briefly, and then they walk home.

Richie falls back into bed, and Eddie starts making the food so they can have a Thanksgiving lunch.

He makes the potatoes and the stuffing, he heats up the pie. He gets out the cranberry sauce. All in all, it isn't a bad spread once it's all said and done. He takes a picture of their little dining table, sends it to the Losers group chat, and gets pictures of everyone else in response.

Once all that is done, he goes over to the bed and kisses Richie awake.

It takes actually trying some of the food for him to really wake up, but when he does, he seems pleasantly surprised. "Oh, wow! Eds, I didn't know you could cook."

"Mostly it's just following directions. I'm good with detail work, that's why I'm good at my job."

Richie snorts. "I'm pretty sure I could burn water."

"That tracks with the fact that you never listen to instructions," Eddie tells him, but he smiles fondly and knocks his foot against Richie's under the table, just so Richie knows he doesn't mean it.

They eat, and they feed Lion-O, and then Richie coaxes Eddie back into bed for another nap.

Eddie actually sleeps, too.

He wakes up to Richie, awake and playing with his hair. They trade sleepy kisses for a little bit, then get up and clean up the kitchen. They eat leftovers for dinner on the couch, and they bicker and nudge each other with their feet while they watch old episodes of Mystery Science Theater 3000.

Even though it follows pretty closely on his birthday, this is also by far the best Thanksgiving Eddie's ever had. As they get ready for bed that night, Eddie comes up behind Richie, wraps arms around his

waist, and tilts his head up to press a kiss to the corner of Richie's jaw.

"Thank you. Again. I know you didn't take me seriously last time, but I mean it - this has been really really good and you made it good. Today was perfect. I'd love to have all our friends in one place again but if we can't - just having you is good. I can't remember the last time I was this happy for three days in a row."

"Eds," Richie says softly. He turns around, cups Eddie's face in his hands, and kisses him.

Eddie kisses back, gladly. "I'm serious. Ask my therapist. Even when you were here last time, there was that weird undercurrent, I mean the first time - and the second time was good but you had to leave again so soon. This was - this was really good for me. It means a lot to me. If I can do anything for you--"

"Hey, don't, don't do that."

Frowning, Eddie blinks at him. "Do what?"

"You don't have to like, pay me back. I got to spend time with you. I got to hang out with our cat. I got to go arcade hopping with you and help you celebrate your birthday and I even got to see the fucking Macy's Day parade. This was good for me, too. And if I move out here, you need to know that it's because I'm happy here. I like it here. I like your place, and Little Mr. Spaghetti, and you make me love New York in a way I never did before you showed it to me."

Everything Richie says settles right in Eddie's chest and glows there. He smiles, and rubs his hands up and down Richie's back. "Yeah? You like it here?"

Richie nods at him. "I really fucking do."

"Our place, then." Richie startles a little, so Eddie pushes forward and doubles down. "Even if you can't move to New York full time, I - of course I want you to, but even if you can't. This is your place, too. This is where you stay when you're in New York, you can put clothes in the closet, keep a toothbrush here, leave some DVDs here,

whatever. It's our place."

"Okay," Richie says, his voice sort of small.

Eddie leans forward and kisses him on the cheek, then on the temple. He has to press up on his toes for that, but it's worth it.

Then they go to bed.

They have to take Richie back to the airport the next day. His flight is pretty late, so it's not as bad as it could be, but traffic is still hell. They listen to music, but Richie's furiously texting for most of the drive, and Eddie can already feel himself getting tense again with Richie all set to leave.

When he takes Richie to security, he still feels a little better than he felt last time. Things are more settled, more official. They've had the time to be more open with each other.

Richie keeps fidgeting with his duffel bag, and as Eddie starts to say goodbye, Richie cuts him off. "My agent says I can move to New York. There's no reason I couldn't be based here. According to him. So I'm - you know if the offer still stands. I can come back next weekend and - some time in the next couple of months I should be able to move in."

"You can come back next weekend?" Eddie repeats back, a little overwhelmed by all the news at once.

Smiling nervously, Richie nods at him. "I can come back every weekend, til I move in. That's what I was sort of negotiating all the way over here."

And how else could Eddie respond to that? He leans up, tugs Richie close, and kisses him within an inch of his life. If he thought the kiss they shared the last time Richie left was enthusiastic, that one was nothing compared to this. Neither of them are holding anything back, and they're just kissing, over-joyed and open-mouthed in the middle of JFK.

When Eddie does pull away, he laughs, muffling it against Richie's shoulder. "I can't believe you. You could have told me that in the

car.”

“I was nervous!” Richie insists, and Eddie just laughs at him again, holding him closer.

They’re low on time, though, and Eddie knows that. He sighs, and leans up to kiss Richie one last time. Then he lets him go. “Okay, okay, hurry up, go before I just. Try to keep you here. But know you’re only getting away because you’re coming back in a week.”

Richie smiles at him, just as dopey as last time. “Okay, Eds. Love you.”

Eddie smiles back. “Love you, too, asshole, now go and don’t miss your flight.”

Richie blows him a kiss, and then he’s gone.

Even though he doesn’t have to, Eddie pretends to catch it, and sticks it in his coat pocket. Then he sort of chuckles, at himself, and turns to leave the airport.

Only moments later, his phone lights up.

i totally saw that you fucking sap

Eddie sends back a picture of himself flipping off the camera, even though he can’t stop smiling.

Author’s Note:

so this is LITERALLY just a lil self-indulgent fluffy thing for thanksgiving and eddie month. also because you know. i missed my very best boys in this verse, which is. my happy place verse. there is an actual like major continuation of this verse in the works where the two of them conquer the list, i promise, i just wanted to write this little self-indulgent one first

- and generally kjalsdf i have a lot of fics i'm working on. there will also maybe be another shorter holiday addition to this verse in december before i finish The Big One kljasdf

anyways!! hope this was fun for you guys, too, as always you can find me on twitter @eddykaspbraks where i love to yell